

# "These Storied Walls"

*A Brief History of -*

Mount Olivet United Methodist Church



**HOMEcoming 1984**



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These Storied Walls:  
A Brief History of Mt. Olivet  
United Methodist Church

Dedication

This sketch is written for Homecoming Sunday, 1984, and is dedicated to those generations who have gone before. They sought neither fame nor this world's wealth; they were good friends, neighbors and parents. They faithfully served their Savior, and loved their country church. If this church achieves great heights, it is because we stand on their shoulders.

It is presented not as a full account, but as a beginning, and corrections and additions are welcomed. If there is interest, a full account will be planned.

May 6, 1984

Clarence Horton

### These Storied Walls

Our fathers worshipped in this glen  
And brought their harvest fruits within  
These storied walls. And now they sleep,  
Where the sheltering oaks still keep  
Their silent watch. They loved this land,  
And even more the church they planned  
Where they could christen, court and wed,  
Strengthen the living, pray for the dead  
And share God's love. Though they are gone  
We never walk this ancient place alone;  
When twilight comes on golden autumn days  
Or rising sun dispels the morning haze  
We feel their presence pass us by -  
As those who worshipped first beneath this sky  
Rejoice to see God's House we've builded here,  
Rejoice to hear beloved hymns ring clear  
Throughout this glade. Our children yet unborn  
Will gather here on sacred Easter morn  
And break Communion bread on Christmas Day  
Or, perhaps, kneel inside to pray.

Guard well this temple, Lord, as we  
Rededicate this house to thee.

Clarence Horton

## THESE STORIED WALLS

Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church lies secure among its oaks as it has for almost two centuries, on the ridge lying to the west of Three Mile Branch, as it meanders to its junction with Great Cold Water Creek. To the west of the present sanctuary is an ancient cemetery where simple slate markers show the final resting places for two couples whose stories are closely bound to the early history of this church: George Rogers and his wife, Martha, and John Rogers and his wife, also named Martha.

By tradition, this hill welcomed early worshippers even before the advent of the first Methodist preachers into this area about 1780. To the west of the church property ran what was called the Great Road (later the Stagecoach Road or the Charleston Road) which brought settlers through North Carolina into Mecklenburg County; it followed almost exactly the route taken today by U. S. 29A (South Main Street). The early Presbyterian ministers, who first came in the 1750s, received warm welcomes in any cabin they chose to visit, from pioneers hungry for religion, news, and a break in the grueling work of settling the frontier. When possible, word was sent to the neighbors, who gathered for an impromptu service. When the weather allowed, the early ministers preached with God's blue sky as a roof, the works of his creation as a backdrop. Later, the Methodist preachers would prefer the outdoors and services were regularly held in arbors. So the tradition is at Mt. Olivet. Before 1800, services were held in an arbor until the congregation erected a log church for use in bad weather.

The story of the settlement of Cabarrus County begins in 1732, when a young man named John Rodgers (sometimes spelled Rogers by him and his descendants) began building his cabin along Back Creek, near its junction with Rocky River. The area was then a part of New Hanover County. He had no deed for the property as there was no one available to make one. He was both brave and resourceful, and entirely unaware that he would



become a patriarch of a large family, and a part of Cabarrus County legend. He knew only that he had to complete his cabin by winter, that he sorely missed the companionship of his Scotch-Irish kin scattered through Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, and that his Presbyterian God had led him to rich land, with broad meadows already cleared and ready for the plow, and creeks which could power a mill. His Indian neighbors avoided him as he did them. He was in the vanguard of a swarm of settlers who settled along both sides of Rocky River, all with good Scotch-Irish names: Anderson, Alexander, Russell, Stafford, Campbell, White, and many more. In general, they settled the western portion of the county-to-be, their settlements centered around their meeting houses at Rocky River and Poplar Tent. They took what they thought was the best land, leaving the eastern part of present Cabarrus and Rowan Counties for the land-hungry German settlers who came down the Great Waggon Road from Pennsylvania about 1747. They entered what was then Bladen County, taken from New Hanover in 1734. The influx of settlers fueled the need for more counties, so that the settlers could be closer to the seat of government at the county court houses, and Anson County was formed from Bladen County in 1750; Mecklenburg, including Cabarrus, was cut off from Anson in 1762. Cabarrus County remained a part of Mecklenburg until 1792, when political differences caused a division.

In the central part of the county both the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and Lutheran Germans lived in harmony along Three Mile Branch, and it became one of the most vibrant parts of the newly-settled land. It was to that area that Joseph Rodgers, eldest son of John Rodgers, went searching for land. His first grant of 200 acres is dated 1762, although he probably lived on the land long before that date. Many settlers recorded their deeds that year both in Anson and Mecklenburg Counties when a land office of sorts opened. Joseph accumulated more than 1,000 acres, deeding parts of it to his sons Moses, John, and Joseph White Rodgers. In addition, John received several grants from the State of North Carolina for more land along Three Mile

Branch. Adjoining one of his grants was a tract of 50 acres, granted by the State of North Carolina in 1804 to one "John Rogers Jun<sup>r</sup>", and described as lying on the Branch "joining the lands of the Heirs of Paul Phifer, deceased, Moses Rogers, Leonard Barbrick, John Rogers Sen<sup>r</sup>, the heirs of Benjamin Shinn Deceased & his own Line." Deed Book 6 at page 69, Cabarrus County Registry. Thus it would seem from the evidence of this deed and others that John Rogers, Jr., would be the son of John Rogers, Sr. However, there is a strong tradition in Mt. Olivet history that John Rogers, Jr., was the son of George and Martha Rogers, beside whom he is buried in Mt. Olivet cemetery. It was not unusual in those days for a person to be named for a favorite uncle, and then designated as Junior to distinguish him. Unfortunately, the puzzle may never be definitely solved. Many of the old records of Cabarrus County were destroyed in a fire in the courthouse in 1875. The deeds were preserved, however, and there is no recorded deed to George Rogers in Cabarrus County. He is only mentioned in the records in 1793 when he witnessed several deeds, and in 1795 when he served on a jury.

We do know definitely, however, that John Rogers, Jr., was the direct descendant of John Rodgers the first settler, and that he was the same man who helped write the early history of this church through a life of service. The 50 acre tract described above joined "his own line." This referred to a tract of 100 acres John Rogers bought from John Moffett, who had inherited it from his grandfather Charles Moffett. It was from this farm that several acres began to be used as a Methodist meeting house. We do not know why John Rogers left the Presbyterian Church of his youth. Most of the Rogers Clan living along Three Mile Branch attended worship services at Bethpage Presbyterian (now Methodist) Church, now located off West C Street in Kannapolis, North Carolina. Joseph and Moses Rogers, and many others, are buried in the cemetery at Bethpage. One tradition is that Martha Rogers was not well at one time and unable to make the trip by wagon to Bethpage Church, and that a Methodist circuit rider brought services to her home. It may be that the Rogers Family was simply attracted to the

clarity and fervor of the early Methodist preaching. Either a house of worship existed on the Moffett land when John Rogers bought it in 1803, or he immediately built a church building there, for when the Sugar Creek Circuit was organized in 1815, Rogers Church was an "older" church according to noted Methodist historian, Dr. Elmer Clark.

## BEGINNINGS

The Sugar Creek Circuit was organized in a meeting at Bethel Church in southern Cabarrus County on May 5, 1815, to serve the areas of Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Montgomery (including present Stanly County), and Iredell Counties. The Sugar Creek Circuit was part of the Catawba District of the South Carolina Conference. Before the organization of the Sugar Creek Circuit, Cabarrus County was included in the area known as the Lincoln (sometimes Union) Circuit, organized by Daniel Asbury in 1790 as a part of the South Carolina Conference. Travel in those days was difficult and the South Piedmont region of North Carolina had closer ties to South Carolina and Virginia than to eastern North Carolina. Methodism in the Western North Carolina Conference owes a great debt to those early South Carolina pioneers of the faith. Cabarrus County was to remain in the South Carolina Conference until 1870, when South Carolina relinquished its last territory in the State.

Rogers Meeting House is listed as a preaching place in the first minutes of the new Circuit on May 5, 1815. This is the first documented mention of the church which was to become known as Mt. Olivet. The first stone in the cemetery is dated 1816. John Rogers must have been a leading figure in the early church as he was elected to the responsible position of Steward at the Quarterly Conference held at Rogers Church on July 27, 1816. Fortunately, the records of the Sugar Creek Circuit were well-kept, and we learn that Quarterly Conferences were held at Rogers Church on August 14, 1818, October 16, 1819, May 12, 1820, ----, 1821, July 30, 1825, and June



16, 1832.

The presence and location of the first church buildings in the vicinity of the present parsonage is also confirmed by deeds made in 1830 when John Rogers swapped 13 acres of land with his neighbor, John Phifer, to straighten their common boundary line. One of the lines was described as crossing Three Mile Branch and running South to the "Meeting House." Deed Book 11 at page 261, Cabarrus County Registry.

Rogers Church continued to be an important part of Sugar Creek Circuit, whose name was changed to Charlotte Circuit in 1834. However, the area experienced such growth that the ministers were not able to serve the multi-county area. On March 18, 1843, we find the following entry in the Charlotte Circuit Minutes:

"Resolved that the following preaching places be dropped, viz. Mt. Dows, Ormans, Wilefords & Pisga and that the preachers of Center Circuit be solicited to take Rogers and Old Bethpage and that the Charlotte Circuit be reduced to a three weeks circuit."

Rogers joined the Center Circuit in the Cheraw District for several years, from 1844 through 1846, when the Concord Circuit of the Lincolnton District was formed. Although there are some gaps in the records at this point, all indications are that Rogers Church was a part of the Concord Circuit from 1847 to 1852. In 1853, the Charlotte District was formed and the Concord Circuit, including Rogers Church, transferred to it.

In 1851 John Rogers decided to transfer title to the meeting house land to the Methodist Church. By deed dated June 27, 1851, he transferred a tract of one and one-quarter acres to Daniel Dry, J. L. Bundy, and other Trustees of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to "use and occupy the said tract of land as a place of stated preaching" but withholding the power of sale from the Trustees so that the land "shall remain as a place of worship for the Methodist denomination to be used for that purpose and that purpose alone forever." Deed Book 20 at pages 61 and 62, Cabarrus County Registry.

The land granted was the area where the parsonage is presently located, and is the same area where the log churches were located. Before the deed was presented for registration on May 7, 1856, additional trustees had to be elected, the number being insufficient: Roger Daywalt (Dayvault), Levi Fink, Daniel Litaker, and Nicholas Cook, were elected by the congregation to serve as Trustees. Since they lived around the church, we can assume that they attended Rogers with their families.

By 1858, Samuel Murph had replaced Levi Fink as a Trustee, as evidenced by the second John Rogers Deed dated September 4, 1858. He conveyed about three acres to the Trustees, which included the original one and one-quarter acre tract. The additional area included part of the present cemetery and sanctuary areas. Again, the Deed stated that the land was not to be sold but was to remain as a "place of public worship for the Methodist community . . . forever." Deed Book 23, page 154, Cabarrus County Registry. Later, small grants from Rev. G. W. Vick and Dayvault Enterprises, Inc., brought the church property to its present extent of 4.217 acres.

We are able to identify Rogers' neighboring churches on the Concord Circuit because of a bad winter in 1855-1856. Rev. Jacob L. Shuford, who was assigned to the Concord Circuit for 1856, ran a notice in the Concord Gazette on February 12, 1856, explaining that the inclement weather had prevented his keeping all scheduled appointments, and he therefore published a complete list of expected worship services. It read as follows:

#### Appointments

Rev. J. L. Shuford, Methodist Minister on this circuit, requests us to announce the following appointments for him on the circuit, as owing to the late bad weather he failed to meet many of the appointments on his last round:

Sunday, February	17th, Concord
Thursday, "	21st, Union
Friday, "	22nd, Rogers
Saturday, "	23rd, Mount Pleasant
Sunday, "	24th, Emory, 11 A. M.
Sunday, "	24th, Gold Hill, 3 P. M.
Wednesday, "	27th, Mount Moriah
Thursday, "	28th, Love's Chapel
Friday, "	29th, Asberry
Saturday, March	1st, Smith's Sc. House
Sunday, "	2nd, Union 11 A. M.
Sunday, "	2nd, Concord at night.

\* \* \*

We first find the name change to Mt. Olivet documented in Branson's North Carolina Business Directory for 1877-'78, under a listing of churches for Cabarrus County. We do not know when the change was first made, but it was probably after the death of John Rogers, who died in Concord on July 23, 1864.

There were five churches on the Concord Circuit in 1884 when good records began to be kept: Mt. Olivet, Union, Center, Rocky Ridge, and Bethpage. The Circuit was then in the Salisbury District and had been since 1881. Bethpage was replaced by St. Matthews later that year. In 1884, Union and St. Matthews united to form Mt. Carmel.

Bogers Chapel joined the four churches on the Circuit in 1902. Although Center was listed on the circuit in January of 1910 it was not included thereafter. Mt. Olivet continued to grow during that time. In addition to an active Sunday School, an Epworth League was meeting in 1904 at Olivet and was termed in "very good working order." By 1907, there were both Senior and Junior Epworth Leagues.

1914 was a landmark year for Mt. Olivet. A growing congregation began to dream of a modern sanctuary to replace the frame structure still in use. A building committee was appointed at the Circuit Quarterly Conference for April 25, 1914: C. J. Goodman, H. A. Scott,

and A. W. Winecoff. By the June, 1915, Meeting the work had been completed and the Trustees of Mt. Olivet were authorized to sell the old building and apply the proceeds on the new church.

By 1934, Concord Circuit had been reduced to three churches: Mt. Olivet, Mt. Carmel, and Rocky Ridge. At the Quarterly Conference for April 4, 1937, a Building Committee for Mt. Olivet Parsonage was elected as follows: R. A. Caldwell, H. L. Fink, B. F. Waddell, C. W. Murph, and R. D. Goodman. A committee was also elected for Rocky Ridge. At the September 14, 1937, meeting it was noted that the parsonage at Mt. Olivet was completed and that Rev. Randall had been living in it for ten days. The Minutes further reflect that the Rocky Ridge-Mt. Carmel Parsonage was scheduled to be completed by Christmas. Mt. Olivet was entering into a new period of growth and leadership as a station church.

In 1939, a Uniting Conference was held in Greensboro for delegates from the Western North Carolina Conference. C. J. Goodman attended the October, 1939, meeting as a lay delegate. Wounds caused by the slavery question in 1844 were finally healed and the Methodist Church reunified. Mt. Olivet came in with 350 members, including local preachers. The church building was valued at \$20,000.00, the parsonage at \$4,700.00, and other property at \$600.00, with no debt at all.

A recreation hall was finished in March of 1947, and dedicated in honor of the men and women of Mt. Olivet Church and Sunday School who served in World War II. In 1951-1952 an educational building was added to the Sanctuary at a cost of \$55,000.00. The addition was dedicated at a note-burning ceremony in 1956.

An education building was added in 1965 at a cost of \$70,000.00 and occupied January 5, 1966. A gift from the Goodman Family in honor of Caleb Jackson Goodman was used to retire the indebtedness on the building which houses the study and church office, along with the classrooms for the children.



In 1969, the church, fellowship building, and the parsonage were air-conditioned, a well was drilled, and the parking and driveway areas were paved. A Memorial Hall was completed in 1976, and dedicated on March 11, 1979. Bishop L. Scott Allen was the officiating minister at the dedication.

In 1984, the interior of the sanctuary was painted and extensive roof repairs carried out. A modern sound system, with taping capabilities, has been authorized by the Administrative Board and the Trustees for the sanctuary. The congregation of some 240 families is presently under the leadership of Rev. Benjamin F. Wilson, and is actively planning for its next two centuries of leadership and service to its community and its Savior.

Space does not permit a detailed listing of all the faithful who have contributed to the work of this Church. In that regard, it seems appropriate to quote from a beloved former pastor, Lewis Gibbs:

"But it has been a great host of witnesses and faithful followers of our Lord, inspired by His spirit. Thus Mt. Olivet United Methodist Church stands as a memorial to the cause of Christ in this community and His mission throughout the world because of the blessings and love of God upon Mt. Olivet and because multitudes of His children have given response to His call. May God's blessings continue to rest upon Mt. Olivet and its people, which truly is a great heritage."

# REGISTRY OF MEMBERS - 1884

Levi J. Little	1850	William C. Litaker	1880
Jane C. Little	1850	Georgia A. Ritchie	1880
Mary M. Litaker	1850	Mary E. Cook	1880
Caleb W. Litaker	1868	John A. Cline	1880
Hettie Cook	1868	John A. Scott	1882
Daniel C. Furr	1868	Alice Cook Basinger	1880
Mary A. Furr	1868	W. F. Goodman	1880
Margaret I. Litaker	1868	Omnia Litaker	1880
Elizabeth C. Fink	1868	Mary E. Litaker Voils	1880
Martha G. Earnhardt	1869	Ella Williford	1880
D. Taylor Litaker	1869	James L. Moore	1880
John A. Fink	1871	E. W. Misenheimer	1880
Franklin S. Goodman	1871	Sarah McDaniel	1880
Martin H. Winecoff	1871	Sarah Murph	1880
Sarah A. Winecoff	1871	Mary F. Goodman	1881
Martha E. Fink	1871	John Little	1881
Hannah Slough	1871	Sarah M. Little	1881
Margaret A. Fink	1871	Sarah M. Litaker	1882
Rufus M. Fink	1871	Joseph N. Winecoff	1882
Margaret L. Seamone	1871	Caleb J. Goodman	1882
Daniel M. Furr	1875	George R. Winecoff	1882
Martha R. Furr	1875	Maggie E. Winecoff	1882
Laura J. Goodman	1875	David Cook	1884
Josephine L. Daywalt	1876	William N. Cline	1884
John W. Daywalt	1876	Mary E. Winecoff	1884
Rachel E. Cook	1879	Thomas E. Winecoff	1884
Sallie E. Little	1879		
Mary A. Earnhardt	1879	TRUSTEES	
Lillie A. Scott	1879		
Elizabeth Seamone	1879	Roger Daywalt	1855
James A. Earnhardt	1879	Levi Fink	1855
		Daniel Litaker	1855
		Nicholas Cook	1855
		Samuel Murph	1858

# ROLL OF PASTORS

## MOUNT OLIVET UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### South Carolina Conference

#### Catawba District, Sugar Creek Circuit

William B. Barnett	1815-1816
Reuben Tucker	1817-1818
Hartwell Spain	1819
Zaccheus Dowling	1820
Jacob Hill	1821
Thomas A. Rosamond	1822
Jeremiah Freeman	1823
Daniel Asbury	1824

#### Cheraw District, Sugar Creek Circuit

Elisha Askew	1825
Daniel F. Christenbury	1826
Daniel F. Wade	1827

#### Lincolnton District, Sugar Creek Circuit

Benjamin Bell	1828-1829
Absolom Brown	1830-1831
James J. Richardson, John K. Morse	1832
John Watts	1833

(In 1834 the name of Sugar Creek Circuit was changed to Charlotte Circuit)

T. R. Walsh	1834
Jacob Ozier	1835
D. G. McDaniel, J. G. Postell	1836
W. R. Smith, J. P. Kerton	1836-1837
William T. Harrison, Mark Russel	1838
Jacky M. Bradley, Martin Eady	1839
P. G. Bowman, C. Smith	1840
Benjamin Hamilton	1841
Michael Robbins, John A. Porter	1842
J. L. Potter	1843

(In 1843, Mt. Olivet - then Rogers Church - was moved from Charlotte Circuit to Center Circuit)

Cheraw District, Center Circuit

John McMackin	1844-1845
W. L. Pegues	1846

Lincolnton District, Concord Circuit

Jacky M. Bradley	1847
W. C. Patterson	1848-1849
W. L. Pegues	1850
J. D. Laney	1851
W. S. Haltom	1852

Charlotte District, Concord Circuit

Willis S. Haltom	1853
Paul F. Kistler	1854-1855
Jacob L. Shuford	1856
John Watts	1857-1858
Aaron G. Stacy	1859
W. W. Thompson, P. L. Herman	1860-1861
Sandy Wood	1862
Sandy Wood, Willis S. Haltom, Supply	1863
James Stacy, W. S. Haltom, Supply	1864
Lewis Scarboro, S. A. Roper, W. S. Haltom, Supply	1865
J. T. Kilgo, W. S. Haltom	1866
M. C. Davis	1867
R. R. Pegues	1868-1869
Samuel Leard	1870

(In 1870, the Minutes of the South Carolina Conference describe Concord Circuit as being in the Wadesboro District; 1870 was a year of great changes as the Cabarrus County area was transferred to the North Carolina Conference and Central United Methodist Church in Concord was made a station church, leaving the Concord Circuit.)

North Carolina Conference

Salisbury District, Rowan and Union Circuit

Thomas L. Triplett	1871-1872
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Charlotte District, Mt. Pleasant Circuit



J. S. Nelson	1873
J. P. Simpson, W. S. Roan	1874
Charlotte District, Concord Circuit	
M. C. Thomas	1875
Charlotte District, Mt. Pleasant Circuit	
A. D. Betts	1876
Charlotte District, Concord Circuit	
J. C. Thomas	1877-1878
W. D. Lee	1879
D. L. Earnhardt	1880
Salisbury District, Concord Circuit	
D. L. Earnhardt	1881
H. P. Cole	1882-1883
Z. Rush	1884-1885
W. L. Grissom	1886-1888
M. V. Sherrill	1889
Thomas W. Smith	1890-1891*
Louis M. Brower	1892
A. R. Surratt	1893-1894
W. H. L. McLaurin	1895-1896
G. G. Harley	1896-1898
J. S. Nelson	1898-1900
F. W. Bradley	1900-1903
W. V. Honeycutt	1903-1906
Albert Sherrill	1906-1907
B. A. York	1907-1909
W. P. McGhee	1909-1911
W. T. Albright	1911-1915
P. L. Terrell	1915-1917
P. L. Shore	1917-1919
N. C. Williams	1919-1921
W. A. Rollins	1921-1923
Seymour Taylor	1923-1924
A. G. Loftin	1924-1928
E. E. Snow	1928-1930
J. A. Baldwin	1930-1933
J. N. Randall	1933-1939

\*During the pastorate of Thomas W. Smith in 1890, Mt. Olivet became a part of the Western North Carolina Conference.

Rev. Randall served the Concord Circuit from 1933 to 1937. Mt. Olivet was made a station church when its parsonage was built in 1937; he then served Mt. Olivet from 1937 to 1939.

Salisbury District, Concord Circuit continued

F. W. Kiker	1939-1943
C. B. Newton	1943-1944
W. B. Davis	1944-1948
C. O. Kennerly	1948-1953
M. C. Ellerbe	1953-1955
Paul Bruton	1955-1959
J. J. Powell	1959-1960
Joseph M. Taylor, Jr.	1960-1963
Albert W. Wellons	1963-1967
I. Pressley Rutledge	1967-1973
Lewis C. Gibbs	1973-1979
Richard B. Jarrett	1979-1983

Present Pastor

Benjamin F. Wilson	1983-
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THOSE WHO HAVE GONE FORTH TO SERVE AS MINISTERS  
FROM MT. OLIVET

Thomas E. Winecoff  
Milton Litaker  
Clarence Williams  
Fred Shinn  
Leroy A. Scott



